

1609 | 5360

THE
BELIEVER's ALPHABET;

O R,
CHRIST the Believer's FRIEND:

SET FORTH IN
FOUR-AND-TWENTY PARTICULARS.

Being the FOUNDATION of
SEVERAL DISCOURSES,

P R E A C H E D

At MIDDLETON-CHENEY, in Northamptonshire,
In JANUARY 1776.



C O V E N T R Y:
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1609/5360.



T O

Mrs. MARY MARLOW,

O F

LEOMINSTER, in Herefordshire.

M A D A M,

AT your Request, the Believer's Alphabet now appears in Public. God has raised you up for many Years, as a Mother in Israel. Your great Piety and Zeal for God and Religion in this degenerate Age, and your Chearfulness to support the glorious Interest of the Friend of Sinners, have made you truly honourable in your Day. I am sensible my Performance will expose me to the Censures of conceited Critics, and Enemies to Christ and Truth; but that no ways discourages me, as I neither court the Smiles, nor fear the Frowns of any. I have not aimed at Eloquence, it being beyond my Reach; neither should I chuse it, had I Ability: But here is plain Truth in a plain Stile. —Facts are stubborn Things; and the Infidels of the Age will find it hard to kick against the Goads. I

DEDICATION.

now commit it to God and his Blessing, humbly praying your pious Desires, in requesting the Publication, may be abundantly answered; and that into whose-foever Hands these may fall by you as the Means, such may be taught their A B C experimentally, and become good Scholars in Christ's School; receive the Truth as it is in Jesus, and be enabled by Grace to call the Lord Jesus Christ, their best and everlasting Friend. Amen.

So prays, MADAM,

Your sincere and affectionate Servant

For CHRIST'S Sake,

R. S.

Northampton, May 7, 1776.

T H E

Believer's ALPHABET, &c.

SOLOMON'S SONG, Ch. v. Ver. 16.

AND THIS IS MY FRIEND.

THIS book is emphatically called, *The Song of Songs*; being the best song in all the world. Some persons are particularly fond of songs, and especially a love song. This song is full of love; and the most sweet and precious love in the world. No love like the love of Christ to the church, and like the love of the church to Christ again. Here is love hotter than fire, and stronger than death. This divine flame, kindled in the heart of the Friend of sinners in eternity, was the blessed motive that led him to enter into covenant respecting our eternal salvation, and is the glorious fountain from whence those precious and divine streams of grace and mercy, peace and pardon, life and salvation, flow into the hearts of believing sinners. Here is a most wonderful display of the illustrious person of Jesus, in his most endearing relations and lovely characters, as being eminently qualified to render him the true and proper object of the delight, esteem, veneration and affection of every intelligent creature, that is a lover of purity and holiness. In this chapter Christ speaks of the church, under the metaphor of a garden, and says, *I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse*: he takes notice of what he had done there; that as he had chosen his garden, cultivated and planted it, he now had been partaking of the fruits it produced, which were grateful and pleasant to him. He then gives a kind and welcome invitation to his spouse, saying, *Eat, O friends; drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved.*

beloved. We then have an account of the base conduct and vile ingratitude of the church to her best Friend, even after such a sweet visit, hearty welcome, and divine repast, with so illustrious a person. Here is further the wonderful love of Christ, even after such ill treatment; he kindly touches her heart with his love, so that her bowels were moved for him; and she arises to open to her Beloved, but he had withdrawn himself, and was gone: she diligently seeks for her Beloved, but finds him not; she calls, but he gives her no answer. The watchmen found her, and smote her, and took away her vail. Then she charges the daughters of Jerusalem, that if they find her Beloved, they would tell him she is sick of love. Her mind was so intent in seeking her Beloved, that she speaks as though every person she met with knew him. The answer they make, is, *What is thy Beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us.* She then enters into a brief, beautiful, and glorious description of her Beloved, in the perfection of his person, and glory of his doctrine; and expresses her interest in him, till she is lost for want of expression to set forth his real excellency and true glory; she therefore concludes her description, by observing, that *he is altogether lovely. This is my Beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.*

In discoursing from this very precious and important part of God's holy and blessed Word, I would take the following method, and consider the three following things:—

- I. That such is the state and condition of man by nature, as to need a friend.
- II. Point out and shew, in a variety of particulars, what a friend the Lord Jesus Christ is.
- III. Who they are that can speak the language of the text, and say, *This is my Friend.*

I. Let it be observed, that such is the state and condition of man by nature, as to need a friend.

1. A man that is lost and knows not what way to take, stands in great need of a kind friend, who is acquainted with the way to direct him right. Is not this the state and condition of man by nature? doth not the Friend of sinners say, he came to seek and save that which was lost? and the prophet declares,



declares, that *all we, like sheep, have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way*, Isa. liii. 6. Is not every power and faculty of man's soul ruined and destroyed by sin? man is lost in his understanding, he has no true knowledge of the real character of the ever blessed God. Thus so many thousands of precious and immortal souls are deluded and deceived by the great enemy of souls, with a vain hope in the mercy of God, not considering that he is a God of inflexible justice, as well as of rich mercy; and that his mercy is never extended, only where justice is satisfied. Man may be said to be lost with respect to his will and affections. How is the will of man biased by sin, and the affections alienated from God! how is he lost in his taste, calling sweet bitter, and bitter sweet! When the soul is convinced by the Spirit of God, he then begins to see his lost and miserable state and condition, and his need of a friend to direct him right. This brings to my mind the case of a godly minister, going to preach among some christian friends, but not knowing the road, and night coming on, lost his way in a large meadow: he endeavoured much to find a track, but all to no purpose: at last necessity obliged him with all his might to cry out lost! lost! Whereupon a bull began to roar, which greatly terrified him, and caused him to cease his cry for a while. — This brought a profitable meditation to his mind, pointing out to his view the distressed state and condition of a sensible sinner, how he endeavours to help himself, but all to no purpose; and when necessity obliges him to cry for help, how the devil roars and terrifies the poor soul; therefore it is that he stands in need of the Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed Friend of sinners, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; to shew him the way wherein he may be saved: and that all the perfections of God harmonize in the sinner's salvation.

2. A man who is very weak and feeble, and has powerful and malicious enemies to encounter with, certainly stands in need of a kind and powerful friend, to give him strength and assistance that he may overcome them, and be delivered out of their hands. How feeble has sin rendered all mankind! man is destitute of any spiritual strength, power or ability, like a poor feeble infant, entirely helpless, being fast locked up under the power of unbelief. But when the soul is enlightened by the Spirit of God, who alone can convince of sin, it is convinced of its own weakness, sees itself to be without strength, and exposed to the malice of those cruel and inveterate enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. He sees sin has

ruined

ruined him, the devil has deluded him, and that the world now hates him ; the law of God that he has broken, curses him, conscience accuses him, divine justice condemns him, and eternal death threatens him. A view of these things fills his mind with dreadful fear ; it makes the soul tremble, not knowing how to escape the vengeance of injured justice, being not able in the least to satisfy its just demands, or contend with its almighty power. This dreadful sight of sin, and sense of guilt, almost makes him despair ; and satan, that great roaring lion, who is continually going about, seeking whom he may devour, greatly terrifies his mind, and makes him cry out, *O wretched man that I am ! how shall I escape the wrath to come !* or, in the language of the poor jailer, *what must I do to be saved ?* Is there any help for such a vile sinner as me ? is there any friend who is both able and willing to take my part ? is there any promise in God's holy and blessed word to give me any encouragement, that I might trust therein ?

3. A person that is sick and sorely diseased, stands in need of a kind friend as a physician, to prescribe a proper remedy in order to a cure. That all mankind are sick and sorely diseased with sin, is evident and clear from our daily experience, even without a revelation. What we daily see, and hourly feel, must be a real fact, and what even a *Bolingbroke** cannot deny. Our first parents in paradise laboured under the pain and distress of this dreadful disease, before they had any revelation : and a sick diseased body is but a faint emblem of the dreadful maladies of the soul. View the miseries of your afflicted relations, hear the groans of little infants just entered the stage of life, with all the symptoms of mortality attending them ; visit the hospitals, see the broken bones, and mangled bodies ; some in wasting consumptions, others in burning fevers ; all these scenes of horror and distress, which even make nature to shudder at the view, and this world appear as an *aceldama* : consider sin as a flood-gate, that it has not only brought distress and misery on the bodies, but ruin and destruction upon the souls of millions. Remember, this disease is epidemical and hereditary ; 'tis also mortal and infectious ; therefore all are in great danger. Well might the prophet say, *The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.* Thus to be sick with sin, is the misery of all ; but to be sick of sin, is only the mercy of those who are sensible of its evil and danger, and are taught by the divine Spirit to desire deliverance from

it.

* A great infidel.

it. These are led to see that they stand in need of a friend; for as our Lord himself says, *The whole have no need of a physician; but they that are sick.* I remember, about two years ago I was desired to call at a house to see a young man, about eight-and-twenty years of age, who had lost the use of his limbs, and was afflicted with many sores in different parts of his body; and at the same time, was ignorant of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sinner's only friend. When I came to the house, I was greatly affected with this awful scene of misery and distress. This young man sat upon a couch, in that afflicted and distressed condition, which he had been labouring under for twelve years, and was also troubled with fits: this brought to my mind the situation of those afflicted with the palsy in the days of our Lord, and his compassion to them. I told my friend, the state of his body was but a faint resemblance of the case of his precious soul, which was of more worth than ten thousand worlds:—that Jesus Christ was such a physician, that he was able to cure both his body and soul, as he could do *that* no other physician could. With respect to his body, I told him, I thought there was no ground for him to hope that would ever be much better in this world; but with respect to his soul, if he saw his lost state and condition, and was enabled to desire salvation in God's way, I had good news to tell him, that as Jesus of Nazareth in the days of his flesh, healed all that had need of healing, so there was a sufficiency of merit in his blood and righteousness to pardon sin, and justify all those who come to God by him: and that the holy Spirit was able and willing to sanctify him throughout, and make him compleatly holy, and that such an object of compassion as he, might enjoy a free, full and glorious salvation, *without money, and without price.* God was pleased to bless this visit to his soul, so that he quickly sent for me again, to hear more of the Lord Jesus Christ, being convinced he greatly needed such a friend as Christ was. God gave him a comfortable sense of his love, he increased in knowledge, experience, and grace, and though he lived a mile and half from where the gospel was preached, he contrived a way to come and hear it, as he greatly thirsted for it, and received great comfort from it. He spent much of his time in secret prayer, took great delight in the holy scriptures, and all other good books, loved the company and conversation of godly people, and died comfortably, about 30 years of age, having a good hope through grace; and is now in glory, singing the praises of Jesus his best friend, among the

spirits of just men made perfect, and where *the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.*

4. A person very poor, and greatly in debt, must of necessity need a friend, who is both able and willing to pay his debts, and free him from the danger and misery of a prison. We may consider sin as a debt, it being the sense that God himself considers it in; and a most enormous debt it is! God is the creditor, man is the debtor, justice the demander, conscience the witness, death the bailiff, hell the prison, the devil the jailer, the omnipotence of Jehovah, the great lock that will keep them confined till the uttermost farthing is paid. As death leaves the sinner, so judgment will find him; and all who die, not having their debts cancelled, must feel the wrath and vengeance of an angry God to all eternity, as they will never be able to discharge the debt. Such is the state and condition of man by nature, that he owes to divine justice ten thousand talents, and hath not one farthing to pay; and although the sinner hath so poor a purse, he hath an exceeding proud heart: not one farthing in pocket, but a heart as proud and haughty as satan: who can say then, the sinner is not in danger? Therefore *knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*, saith the great apostle. Doth not this argue that the sinner wants a friend? what wilt thou do, poor sinner, when God calls thee to an account;—when his debt-book is opened against thee;—when divine justice shall demand payment, if thou art not able to pay, and hast no friend to apply unto? Thy conscience will then testify against thee, saints and angels will witness to the justness of that sentence the Judge will then pronounce against thee; saying, *Depart, thou cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*; where there will be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth, for ever and ever.

5. He who is a criminal, and stands indicted of a breach of the law, will need a friend, as a counsellor, to plead his cause. And what is it the sinner is not guilty of? he has broke the whole law of God. *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. The whole world is become guilty before God*;—*there is none righteous, no not one*;—*for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* It is a vain thing to deny the charge: sinner, plead guilty now, it will be too late at the bar of Jehovah. Conscience, speak for God; bring to the sinner's remembrance all his horrid oaths and dreadful curses, with which he has so often polluted the air, and dared the Almighty to damn him even to his face; range all his impious

ous speeches against his great Maker, his hatred to his bible, and the dear children of God ; put him in mind of all his sabbath breaking, drunkenness and debauchery, of all his wicked lying, and filthy conversation ; if he has been a moralist, or self-righteous pharisee, tell him of his covetousness, and idolatry ; the plague of the heart ;—that it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ;—that it is like a cage of unclean birds ;—that the spirituality of God's law, and inflexible justice, take cognizance of every thought ;—that all the seeds of sin are in the heart ;—and that there wants a conformity to the whole law of God ;—that the sinner is absolutely guilty, and needs a friend as a counsellor to plead his cause.

6. When any are constituted rebels against a just and mighty prince, they need a friend as a mediator to intercede in their behalf. And here the simile stands good : sinners are the worst of rebels, as no rebellion is so bad, as to rebel against God : and this we are also guilty of, for the Lord says, *I have brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.* We have broke through all his laws, been guilty of high treason against his sacred person, conspired against his Son, the glorious prince Emmanuel, taken up arms of hostility against our lawful sovereign ; entered into league with the infernal powers of darkness, under the command of the cruel tyrant, and black prince of the bottomless pit. We have trampled under foot Christ's authority, despised his blood, and counted it an unholy thing, and have said in our hearts and actions, *We will not have this man to reign over us.* We have given up the throne of our hearts to a tyrant, that hates the King of heaven, and have tore down the king's coat of arms, and hoisted up that of the devil. In all this we have been detected, and taken in the field of action by the King's forces. Our crimes have merited eternal death, sentence is passed upon us, and we only wait for execution. Under these circumstances we greatly need a friend, as a mediator, to intercede in our behalf before the King our rightful sovereign.

7. When persons have fell into a deep, dark and horrible pit, and are no ways able to help themselves out, they must stand in need of a kind and willing friend to help them out. The pit of nature is a horrible pit indeed, and all mankind are fallen into it ; it is a very dark pit, and very deep, wherein is no water, nor any supplies, which must of consequence

render such a situation very dreadful ; especially if we add to this, that there are in this pit a great number of venomous creatures, as serpents, snakes, adders, and other poisonous reptiles. Thus the horrible pit of nature's darkness, is a state of darkness indeed ; as there is not the least glimmering of light there ; the glorious shinings of the Sun of righteousness not being enjoyed, for all that dwell in that place are strangers to his clearing and divine rays, they being children of darkness and not of the light. It is also a place of great misery, as all who dwell there are poor, and blind, and miserable, and wretched, and naked, being destitute of every thing truly and spiritually good ; and being possessed of every thing really and properly bad, and have no friend in all the world able to help them : fathers and mothers can give their children no relief ; the nearest and dearest friend in all the world cannot help another, being all like a company of miserable beggars, slaves or captives, who cannot relieve another's wants, having nothing for themselves ; being involved in the same common misery and wretchedness. So it is also a state of confinement. All here are in bondage and slavery, being in bondage to the law, slaves to sin and satan ; even the worst of all slaves, being willing slaves : other slaves find a way sometimes to break their chains, to make their escape, and get their liberty, but these have it not in their power, had they ever such a will. Death always sets all other slaves at liberty, but cannot these ; for even then it brings greater distress, and makes them far more miserable.—Also this state is a state of great danger. Persons in such a situation as this, cannot survive long for want of proper supplies. Their case is desperate. Also, a serpent may bite, and unless a proper remedy be applied quickly, the poison may kill the patient. Many millions have actually perished in this forlorn condition, and dangerous situation. From these considerations it is evident and plain, that our state and condition by nature is such, that we need a friend infinitely superior to all human aid and assistance, even such a friend as the Lord Jesus Christ is, for there is no other name given under heaven, whereby a sinner can be saved, but in and through him alone.—I come now,

II. To point out and shew, in a variety of particulars, what a friend the Lord Jesus Christ is.

And this I shall attempt to do in alphabetical order ; and begin first with the letter A, and shew that Christ is an *Almighty Friend.*

Unless he be an almighty Saviour, our faith is vain, we are yet in our sins, and come under that dreadful curse, where it is said, *Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm*, Jer. xvii. 5. If a mere creature could have been sufficient to have compleated the work of man's salvation, if such an atonement was all that the law and justice of God could require, or if salvation had been by our sincere though imperfect obedience, as many will affirm, (though quite repugnant to scripture) and if Christ in his life and death were only as our example, may it not be rational to suppose, that so near and dear as the precious Jesus was to God his divine Father, he would have spared his dear and well-beloved Son, who was with him in eternity, and daily his delight, and have sent on this important errand some angelic being, or have created some proper holy person to have lived as a pattern and example, and to have wrought miracles, as Moses and others have done, (to prove they were sent of God) to have died as a martyr, as most of the apostles did, as well as many thousands since ; and after all, have took him up into heaven as he did Enoch and Elijah ? No, sirs, all this would not have done; our case was desperate, nothing short of almighty power could save a sinner. Sin is an infinite evil, as it is against an infinite God ; it exposes the soul to an infinite loss, therefore it is that sinners who die under the guilt of sin, must feel the wrath and vengeance of God, to an infinite duration : they being but finite creatures, and not able to make an infinite satisfaction, which are the demands of a broken law, and the inflexible justice of the eternal God. What constitutes the ability of the Lord Jesus Christ, as our almighty Friend and Saviour, is, his being God and man, in one glorious Person; as man, he could suffer, bleed and die ; as God, he could merit by his sufferings and death ; so that the dignity of the god-head gives virtue to the sufferings of the manhood, and makes them of an infinite nature, every way satisfactory to all the demands of law and justice. His life was a perfect obedience; his death a compleat atonement ; his resurrection a glorious proof of the dignity of his person, the merit of his sufferings, and security of salvation, compleated thereby : for as he died for our sins, so he rose again for our justification, Rom. iv. 25. And is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them, Heb. vii. 25.

Reflection. As Christ is an almighty Friend, may the dear people

people of God rejoice, and learn to put their trust and confidence in him at all times.

We now come to the second letter, B ; from which we shall consider Christ, as a *Bountiful Friend*. As we have considered his ability to save, we now come to shew how free, ready and willing he is to give all suitable and precious blessings, to make his dear people happy in time, and glorious to all eternity. And here it may be proper to observe, that he is the grand store-house, or repository, of all the rich and glorious blessings of grace ; as the psalmist says, *All my springs are in thee*, Psal. lxxxvii. 7. He is our spiritual Joseph ; the store-houses are open, and his heart is open, to give like a God. His gifts are equal to the dignity of the giver ; and as Joseph supplied all that came to him, so Jesus turns none away that come to him aright ; the hungry are filled with good things ; while the rich are sent empty away. How bountiful and generous was Joseph to his brethren ?—how much more so is the Lord Jesus Christ to all his dear people ? But, remember, he gives to none but beggars ; therefore be not ashamed to beg ; it is an honest trade, and when you have fared well yourself, send as many others as you can ; and depend upon it, this bountiful friend will never be angry with you : and come as often as you need favours, he will never say you are troublesome ; remember his own words, *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children : how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that ask him ?* Luke xi. 13. Again, *Ye receive not, because ye ask not*, James iv. 2. For he is always more ready to give, than ye are to receive. Consider what blessings you need, and remember what he has promised in his holy and blessed word : all fullness of grace is in him ; all pardon and righteousness you will find there ; he is *of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and compleat redemption.*—*If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.* Remember, how many millions in glory have been supplied by him, and are continually receiving from him. It is he who supplies every living creature, whose tender mercies are over all the works of his hands : but his choicest blessings are given to the objects of his special love. Think it not too late to come, and that he must have parted with all before this time, for his fulness is infinite, and his treasures inexhaustible : though he has been giving out for above five thousand years, yet he is not one farthing poorer ; but is as ready and willing to give now

as ever ; and has commissioned all his appointed servants, to tell every desiring sinner to come and welcome to him, as a bountiful friend : and that whosoever cometh, he will in no wise cast out.

Reflection. As Jesus is a bountiful friend, may all then desire to put their trust in him ; and be encouraged to come at all times, with humble boldness to a throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy, and find grace to help them in all their times of need.

We shall now attend to the third letter, which is C ; and consider Christ as a *Comforting Friend*. And if we consider the various trials, sorrows, afflictions, temptations and distresses of God's people while here, in this vale of tears, we may easily see how suitable and precious this part of Christ's character is to all his dear children, and how greatly mistaken the mad world are, who vainly suppose there is no pleasure and comfort to be enjoyed in the ways of religion : for even the bitter things of God's people are far preferable to all the sweets of sin ; for they have such pleasure, and such joy, that the world knows nothing of, that a stranger intermeddleth not with. For their joy is not carnal but spiritual ; it resembles that of heaven in the nature of it, though not in the perfection of it ; it is not fancied but real, not transient but everlasting : it softens afflictions, sooths their griefs, is a means of scattering doubts and fears, increases faith, and encourages hope ; it administers comfort, and promotes holiness ; it has God for its author, God for its support, and God for its object ; as the prophet says, *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God, for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness.* Their joy also has God for its end, as it all centres in him ; for " man's chief end is to glorify God, and " to enjoy him for ever." And the soul will never be compleatly happy, 'till that blessed period arrives ; 'tis what the soul above all things longs for, *having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.* So likewise, the ways and methods this blessed friend makes use of to comfort his dear children, are various ; sometimes he comforts them by the application of sweet and precious promises, just suited to the very trials they are exercised with ; at other times by kind interpositions of providence in their favour, as in the case of good old Jacob, when his brother Esau met him with intent to slay him ; and David often found it so, when Saul, his inveterate enemy, sought to take away his life. He also is pleased to comfort by

sweet

sweet visits, and precious manifestations of his love to their souls, by the blessed whispers of his holy Spirit, assuring them of their interest in him, and union to him; so likewise, he often blesses christian conversation, and makes his dear people useful for comforting one another, by testifying what he has done for them time after time: he also has given a strict charge to his faithful ministers, saying, *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people; saith your God;* which is to be done by preaching the comfortable doctrines of the gospel, which are wonderfully calculated for comforting God's people. He also comforts his people by his own ordinances which he has instituted, such as baptism and the Lord's supper, singing of hymns, the ordinance of prayer, and reading the holy scriptures; he hath also *confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, his people might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them,* Heb. vi. 18.

Reflection. Is Christ a comforting Friend? then let God's afflicted children learn to know where to fly in all their distresses, and to seek comfort in that way, wherein God has promised to give it.

This now brings us to the fourth letter, which is D; and this leads us to consider Christ, as a *Dear Friend.* And how dear and precious this blessed Friend is to his dear children, cannot be easily described; he says himself, *He that loves house or land, father or mother, wife or children, yea even his own life, more than me, is not worthy of me.* Well might the apostle Peter say, *unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious.* How exceeding dear is the person of Jesus to all true believers: he is *the chiefeſt among ten thouſand, and altogether lovely.* Truly excellent and glorious is the Friend of sinners. Exquisite beauty shines forth in the person of the dear Redeemer. How dear is he in all his divine perfections! such as his omnipotence, which makes him exceeding dear to them: the language of their souls is; Is this blessed Friend of sinners mine? is he possessed of almighty power? is he the omniscient God, who is infinite in wisdom and understanding? is he omnipresent? is this essential to his nature? does he fill all space? is he able to punish for sin? do the devils and damned in hell continually feel his almighty power? was he the original framer and maker of all things by the word of his almighty power? was it he that garnished the heavens, and spread the curtain of the sky? is he the all-seeing God? does he mark all the actions of men? does his eye like a sun-beam dart through the dark shades of night, and take cognizance of all the foul deeds

of sinners ? is he every where present at the self-same time ? is his gracious presence enjoyed by saints here, and his glorious presence by the church triumphant above ? Then what have I to fear, since *my beloved is mine, and I am his* ? Likewise, how dear is this precious Friend in his offices, as Prophet, Priest and King. Thus the believing sinner, sensible of his own ignorance, sees the great necessity of instruction from this blessed Friend. Also sees the suitableness of that blessed sacrifice, Jesus our great high Priest once offered up for sin, and his great work of intercession, now he is in glory, having sat down at his Father's right hand, where he ever lives to plead in behalf of his church and people. His kingly office also, renders him exceeding dear to all the happy subjects of his grace ; he is the crowned King of Zion, being the great King and Potentate of heaven and earth : the hearts of his beloved subjects are his throne ; there it is that he sways his sceptre ; his language is, *My son, give me thy heart* ; and their answer is, O thou blessed King, come and rule in us, reign over us, and conquer every enemy for us.

His laws are pure and good, his judgments right ;
His yoke is easy, and his burden light.

His kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness, and his loving subjects pray, *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. View him in all his relative characters, as a father, husband, and brother, and see if this precious friend, is not exceeding dear to all those souls that put their trust under the shadow of his divine wings : like as a father pitieith his children, so this blessed Friend pitieith those that fear him, and hope in his mercy ; and, as he says by the evangelical prophet, *Thy maker is thy husband, and thy Redeemer, the holy One of Israel*. Isa. liv. 5. Likewise the great apostle declares, *That both he which sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren*, Heb. ii. 11. And if brethren, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17.

Reflection. As the Lord Jesus Christ is so dear and precious a friend, let all the dear people of God, beg to have their affections more and more weaned from this vain world ; and be determined to know nothing, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

This brings us to the fifth letter, which is E, from which we shall consider Christ as an *Everlasting Friend*. And this

part of his character is equally necessary to the former, as our everlasting happiness depends upon it; because it is his infinite nature, infinite perfections, everlasting love, and the sweet enjoyment of his everlasting and delightful presence, which will constitute the joy and happiness of the saints in glory. Eternity engaged his attention in forming a scheme of salvation, which should terminate in the everlasting happiness and delight of the objects of his peculiar love. His mind, will, desire, and determination, is ever the same respecting them; for, *he is of one mind, and none can turn him.* He is a God, that changeth not, therefore it is we are not consumed. Altho' he alters in the dispensations of his providences, his purpose remains the same. And this is one way he makes use of, in order to accomplish his gracious ends and designs; for if *thy children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes;* but will he no longer be their friend? yes, verily; for he himself adds, *Nevertheless, my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him; nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips,* Psal. lxxxix. 30—33. And as the great apostle says, nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is, in Christ Jesus our Lord. If it were possible for any thing to separate God's people from the everlasting friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ, sin would; for that is what broke the original bond of friendship, that subsisted between God and his creature man, in the garden of Eden. It was sin that incensed the justice of God against the sinner, and that alienated the affections of man, from God their original centre. Can it be supposed, that God's people can prove any worse than Jesus Christ knew they would? Did he not know what lengths of sin they would run? Were not all the sins of God's people laid upon Jesus Christ, their head and surety? Did he not atone for all their offences? Hath he not said, *I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins?* Isa. xlivi. 25. And hath he not also declared by his prophet, that *when the sins of Israel are sought for, they shall not be found?* Jer. 1. 20. Are not God's people justified from all things, from which they could not be by the law of Moses? Then what is there that can cause Christ not to be their everlasting friend? Sin is atoned for and pardoned, the law is magnified and made honourable, justice is compleatly satisfied, satan is conquered, death is disarmed, and all the perfections of

of God harmonize in their everlasting salvation. For what Christ did, shall stand for ever; therefore he was their friend in eternity, is their friend in time, and has promised never to leave them, nor forsake them: but will be their friend in life, and in death; will appear for them at the day of judgment, and he will prove their everlasting friend when time shall be no more.

Reflection. As Christ is his people's everlasting friend, may it be a means of comforting and encouraging them while here, under the continual insults and frowns of numerous and inveterate enemies; and may it raise their dejected minds, to contemplate on that happy period, when they will be absent from the body, and present with the Lord; there to behold with pleasure, all their dear friends gone before them, and to spend a glorious eternity with Christ their best friend.

We shall now take notice of the sixth letter, which is F; and point out Christ as a *Faithful Friend*.

The faithfulness of Christ as a friend, appears in his punctually performing all that he has promised to us, and all he has engaged to do for us.—He professed in eternity to be the friend of sinners; first he made them the objects of his love, then the creatures of his power, the care of his providence, the subjects of his grace, and the heirs of his glory. First they were the objects of his special love: even in eternity, he was *rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and his delights were with the sons of men*; he therefore entered into covenant with God his divine Father, and he faithfully performs all the conditions of that covenant: so that God is honoured, justice satisfied, the law magnified, the sinner pardoned and justified, through his atoning blood and righteousness; all hell confounded; the holy angels rejoicing; God and man reconciled; heaven and earth meeting; the saints adoring; the church triumphant above, and the church militant here, uniting, and mingling their praises of hosannas and hallelujahs to God, and the Lamb, for ever and ever. And thus, the friend of sinners was not only faithful with respect to what he had engaged for us; but he is equally faithful in all he has promised to us; which is, grace in time, and glory in eternity; the one being the first, the other the last link in the believer's golden chain. All quickening, supporting and supplying grace, comes from this glorious fountain and source; *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.*

In order to prove Christ a faithful Friend, we may call in, as witnesses, good men, and bad; also good angels and devils. First, good men: call in the patriarchs; ask Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Good old father Abrahamsays, I bear witness to the glorious truth, that Christ is a faithful friend: he called me from Ur of the Chaldees: he was faithful to me in every place where his providence led me.—Speak, Isaac, for your faithful friend: says Isaac, when my good old father and mother were dead, I always found Christ to be faithful to me; he raised me up friends, and was with me, agreeable to all the promises he made me and my father.—Now let us hear what Jacob has to say: says Jacob, I was under a necessity of flying, through fear of my brother Esau; but when I came to Bethel, this faithful friend appeared to me in a dream, with this gracious promise, *Bebold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest; and will bring thee again into this land: for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of*, Gen. xxiii. 15. Now if we were to summon in the prophets, they would all testify respecting this blessed truth.—Let us call in the apostles, and hear their evidence: they were witnesses both of the life, death and resurrection of this faithful Friend. He rose the third day, according to his promise. He faithfully accomplished his promise, (on the day of Pentecost) of sending the Holy Ghost, after his ascension to glory: as also, his promise of being with them, even to the end of the world; and of giving them power to work miracles, and speak all languages, and perform great and mighty wonders, which he faithfully made good unto them. Summon in the glorious company of martyrs, and see whether they will not declare, a faithful Jesus: yes, say these blessed men, Christ is a faithful friend; and we are his witnesses: many of us he delivered out of the hands of our persecutors, as the three children in the fiery furnace; and Daniel in the lion's den; and all of us he supported in the fiery trial, even to the great amazement of our inveterate and most cruel enemies. And all the dear people of God, will cheerfully testify that Christ has ever been a faithful friend, having always made good his gracious promises, wherein he encouraged them to hope.—We will now summon in the whole wicked world, and see whether, with all their malice and cruelty against Christ, and his interest, they could ever gain their purpose, extirpate religion out of the world, and tear up Christ's interest

Interest by the roots: witness all their cruelty and bloodshed, and horrible massacres. Hear their own confession: all that we could do, answered no purpose; for the word of the Lord multiplied and grew, the churches increased, and Christ's interest flourished. We could not help seeing that Christ was faithful to his people.—And if we ask the holy angels, they will gloriously proclaim Christ to be a faithful Friend: say these glorified beings, we were hovering round the cross, with affection, wonder and amazement; we heard the dying thief's prayer, and this faithful friend's answer. When death had done his office, we cheerfully attended our blessed master, and were witnesses to the faithful accomplishment of that precious promise. We bore them both company to the heavenly paradise, and saw Jesus in all his resplendent glory, pass through the pearly gates, amidst myriads of glorified saints and angels, who immediately bent their sceptres, and cast their crowns at his feet, whilst a herald proclaimed, *Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of Glory shall come in.* Likewise a flaming cherub cried aloud to the heavenly host, to make a wheel on the right and left, in order to make way for the glorious Redeemer, and his train. We then saw him move towards the azure throne of God, his divine Father, who said to his dear Son, *Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy enemies thy foot-stool.* He then presented the penitent thief to his blessed Father, who embraced the prodigal, while flaming justice smiled to see the crimson dye, and glorious righteousness with which he shone; and all the heavenly host glorified God. Likewise, these blessed spirits attest how they heard the church at prayer one evening, until midnight, when Peter was in prison; and that quickly one was dispatched to bring Peter unto them.—And if we ask the very devils, they are obliged to declare Christ to be a faithful Friend. Methinks I see satan hurrying on Judas to betray Christ; and when the foul deed was done, how greedily did he devour his soul!—Then he attacks Peter, who begins to curse and swear, and deny his Lord: Then the great roaring lion opened his dreadful jaws, but Jesus turned and looked upon Peter; rescued him from the jaws of destruction, as a miracle of grace; and all that the lion could do, was, to gnash his teeth with rage, and confess that Peter had a faithful friend. So likewise with equal fury he beset David, and no doubt thought he had accomplished his malicious purpose; but he again found, to his great grief, that he had missed the prey.

prey, for Nathan the prophet, was sent to tell him he should not die, but live, and that the Lord had put away his sin. From hence, therefore, it evidently appears, that Jesus Christ is a faithful Friend.

Reflection. As Jesus Christ is so faithful a friend, have not all God's dear children reason to be ashamed of all their base ingratitude, and unfaithfulness, to so faithful a friend as Christ is?

The seventh letter is G; wherein we shall consider Christ as a *Gracious Friend*. And indeed it was rich grace that inclined him to be our friend; for he was under no obligation to shew us the least favour, but might have treated man with the same justice and severity, he did the fallen angels. Well might the apostle say, *It is by the grace of God, I am what I am.* And, *To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ.* Salvation is all of grace, from first to last: it was grace that drew the plan, and grace that executes all the glorious purposes; it is free grace, that calls a sinner out of darkness into marvellous light; it is an act of free grace, as well as strict justice, to pardon and justify a sinner; it is by the Spirit of grace, that a sinner is sanctified, and made fit for glory; and it is Jesus Christ, our gracious friend, who sends the Spirit of grace into the sinner's heart: the law came by Moses, but grace and truth by the Lord Jesus Christ. And it is by grace we are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.—If thou knewst the gift of God, (said this gracious Friend to a poor miserable sinner,) thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water, though she had denied him a drink from her pitcher: John iv. 10. And what is more wonderful still, is, that this grace is given to enemies and rebels against him; even to those that murdered him. How did this gracious Friend with his dying breath say, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* And commissioned Peter to tell the very same persons, after his resurrection and ascension, when they were pierced to the heart, that *the promise was to them, and their children, and to all who were afar off, even as many as the Lord our God should call.* Which promise, was a promise of grace and mercy, pardon and forgiveness, life and salvation.—Besides, the character he gives himself, and proclaims himself by, is, *The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant*

in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. Likewise, he is a gracious Friend, as he gives grace to his people, to quicken, supply, support and comfort them, under afflictions and trials; as when his servant Paul had a thorn in the flesh, and fled to his gracious Friend, he received this agreeable answer, *My grace is sufficient for thee.* —He also gives grace to withstand temptation, that his people be not wholly overcome by the enemy; as he did to Peter, when he told him, *Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not,* Matt. xxii. 31, 32. He gives grace to poor backsliders, by healing their backslidings, and loving them freely; and also by pouring forth a Spirit of grace and supplication upon his children, enabling them to plead with him as a covenant God, they having a right to all covenant blessings he has promised in his holy and blessed word.—In all these views, he appears to be a gracious friend indeed.

Reflection. O, to grace how great a debtor
 Daily I'm constrain'd to be!
 Let that grace now, like a fetter,
 Bind my wand'ring heart to thee.
 Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it;
 Prone to leave the God I love:
 Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
 Seal it from thy courts above.

This brings us to the next letter, which is H; and here we shall treat of Christ as an *Honorable Friend.* And here it may be proper to observe, that the dear Redeemer in himself, is a most honorable person. Real dignity and glory are essential to his divine nature. All the titles he assumes, are honorable titles. Every character, office and relation he makes himself known by, are honorable ones. But his being an honorable friend to all true believers, more particularly appears, in his entering into covenant with God his divine Father, and the holy Spirit, and proposing to inflexible justice, and God's holy and righteous law, honorable terms and conditions, every way adequate to all the righteous requirements of the one, and just demands of the other. All his undertakings and glorious actions, are honorable ones; and in the execution thereof, he has gained great honor and renown, by spoiling all the powers of darkness, and putting to rout all the legions of the bottomless pit, with all the fury and rage

rage of a wicked world ; having been at the very capital, dyeing his garments in the blood of his enemies, as the prophet gloriously describes him in his return from the victory, saying, *Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. And when the enquiry is made, Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-press? the answer is, I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me : for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come, Isa. lxiii. 1,—4.* And thus he has gained a compleat conquest over every enemy, rescued all his dear people out of the jaws of destruction, and opened a glorious way for the communication of rich grace, and the sweet manifestation of God's love to their souls.—He also treats with his dear children in an honorable way, and confers great honors and favours upon them. What an honor has he done his ministers, by giving them a commission, making them successful, and rewarding their labours, with a crown of righteousness in the end, saying, *Well done, good and faithful servants; enter ye into the joy of your Lord.*—He also honors his people with his comforting, sensible presence, the sweet visits of his love, and tokens of his divine favour.—So likewise he has honored our nature, by taking it into union with his divine nature.—He has done great honor to the church, by marrying her, and taking her into so near and honorable a relation.—He has done great honor to the grave, by lying in the same dusty bed in which his people lie : and he will honor them in the glorious resurrection, as they shall rise first, to everlasting glory and happiness ; for though the body be sown in dishonor, it shall be raised in glory. So likewise, they will be in honor with him to all eternity, inheriting the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.

Reflection. As Christ has so honored his people, surely they ought to be very zealous for his honor and glory ; and above all, desire never to be ashamed of him, nor a shame or disgrace to him.

We now come to the ninth letter, which is I ; and shall consider Christ as an *Inviting Friend.* And here we may take some notice of the dignity and glory of the person inviting ;—

viting;—the misery and wretchedness of the persons invited;—what they are invited to;—with the import of the invitation. The glorious person inviting, is the eternal God, the second person in the ever blessed trinity, infinite in power, majesty and glory. Likewise there is all fulness of grace in him, and a real fitness in those blessings he is possessed of, to do every poor needy sinner good. The Saviour's merits are exactly suited to the sinners necessities. The blood of Jesus, which alone is the procuring cause of pardon, is just what the sinner needs; as it is that which cleanseth from all sin; and the righteousness of Christ is compleat and perfect, being just suited to justify a condemned sinner. It is the spirit and grace of Jesus alone, that regenerates and sanctifies a sinner, and makes him meet to be a partaker of the glorious inheritance of the saints in light; for, *if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ.* Likewise, there is a freeness in his nature to impart those blessings, and the invitation he makes is free, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and be that bath no money, come ye; buy and eat, yea come, buy wine and milk, without money, and without price,* Isa. iv. 1. Likewise, the persons invited are miserable objects of distress, being the poor in spirit, whose hearts are broken with sin; who are weary and heavy laden, groaning under the enormous weight and burden of guilt, which lies with great pressure upon the mind and conscience, so that the soul can have no rest day nor night, but is in continual distress and grief. Also, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, with all repenting and returning prodigals, are characters described in the word of God, and such that Jesus invites.—What this blessed Friend invites to, are blessings of the utmost importance: they are not small blessings, but exceeding great in their nature, as there is an intrinsic excellency and value in them. The poor in spirit, are invited to spiritual riches; the broken hearted, to spiritual healing; those who are weary and heavy laden, to spiritual rest; come to me, says this blessed friend, and ye shall find rest for your souls. And though this world is not their rest, it being polluted, yet they rest in the love of Jesus here, as the psalmist expresses it, *Return to thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee,* Psal. cxvi. 7. And there is a blessed rest remains for the people of God. All that hunger and thirst after righteousness are invited to the gospel feast, where there is a rich variety of every suitable good: and the repenting,

returning prodigals, have a hearty welcome to their father's house, and father's embraces. This invitation imports great condescension, great love, great compassion, great goodness, and great generosity.

Reflection. Certainly, such friendship as this calls for our highest wonder, greatest love, humility and everlasting thankfulness, adoration and praise.

The next letters that come under consideration, are K and L; under which we shall consider Christ as a *Kind and Loving Friend*. Kindness and love may be distinguished from each other: but in the friendship of Christ, they are not to be separated. You may be kind to a person you do not love, but you cannot love a person without tokens of kindness and respect. The psalmist emphatically speaks of the loving-kindness of this Friend being better than life, *Psal. lxiii. 3.* And as true believers are the objects of his special love, we may consider the kindness there spoken of, as including all blessings both of providence and grace; and called, loving-kindness, because it all flows from that original and glorious fountain of God's eternal and everlasting love, to the happy subjects of free and distinguishing grace. But the kindness and love of Christ as a friend, principally appears in undertaking our cause, and substituting himself in our room and stead; taking our law place, and dying for our sins, in order to make an atonement to divine justice, and to work out and bring in an everlasting righteousness to justify all his dear children. The great work of redemption wonderfully displays the rich love of Christ, as a kind and affectionate Friend: for when we were all under bondage to the law, and in slavery to sin and satan, Jesus our near kinsman, having the right of redemption, obtained an eternal one for us, and that by his own blood: for, *we were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold,—but with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish.*—Calling grace, also, proclaims the kind and loving friendship of Jesus Christ: if a nobleman calls to see a poor cottager in a friendly way, it is esteemed a great favour; and more so, when it is to call him away from his poor cottage, and mean employment, to his own seat and honorable service. This is but a faint idea of what the Friend of sinners calls his favourites to: he calls them from that base and mean employment they are by nature busied in, which is like that of the poor prodigal, to honorable service. They are called from slavery, to freedom; from rags, to a robe; from a famine, to a feast; from poverty, to riches; from beggary,

beggary, to royalty ; from darkness, to glorious light ; from a poor mean cottage, to a glorious paradise above.—He farther manifests his kind and loving friendship, by giving them faith to believe in, trust and depend upon him, for all that they need, for body or soul, life or death, time or eternity. Also, in giving them true and evangelical repentance for sin ; sweet and precious promises to rely upon ; comforting and divine ordinances, wherein he has graciously promised to meet with them, and bless them. Also, his kindness and love is manifested in all the various dispensations of providence, he is pleased to exercise them with, as these are all intended for important ends and purposes, and are well adapted for great designs of mercy ; he having promised, that they shall *all work together for good to them that love him, and are the called according to his purpose.* This friendship is farther seen in granting supporting grace, in sanctifying us here, interceding for us in glory, and at last bringing us safe home into his heavenly kingdom, there to spend a blessed and happy eternity, in celebrating the high praises of our glorious Friend for ever and ever.

Reflection. As Christ is so kind and loving a friend, surely we ought to manifest our love to him, by a strict observance of all his commands, and by affectionate tokens of loving-kindness to all the brethren.

The next letter which comes under consideration, is M ; and here we shall shew, that Christ is a *Merciful Friend.* How suitable is mercy to the miserable, and what a precious blessing is it to have so merciful a Friend ! And indeed, Jesus is the original fountain of this rich mercy ; it all comes from him : it is one glorious name he proclaims himself by, saying, *I am the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful.* The cause of this divine mercy, is not our misery ; for all are miserable by nature, but all do not partake of this divine mercy : neither is it our merits, or self-righteousness ; for all works before faith, are full of sin, and therefore cannot please God, much less merit any thing at his hands. And even works which are good in their nature, and which may do good to the objects on whom they are bestowed, yet not flowing from a right principle, which is faith, are not acceptable to God.—And even the works of good men, yea true believers, whose works alone are acceptable and well pleasing to God, yet these are not meritorious ; for as the apostle says, after all, *we are unprofitable servants.* And though the works of God's people are spoken of in scripture, it is only

said, *their works shall follow them, not go before them, in order to merit heaven for them.* Neither do any works, even perfectly keeping the whole law, merit salvation, nor can any person, if it were possible for him to keep the whole law, need any salvation; for where there is no transgression, there can be no guilt; and if no guilt, no punishment; and so, by consequence, no need of salvation. The promise made to Adam, in case of obedience, while in a state of innocence, was only a paradisaical life, and not an heavenly one; which appears very plain, as he was banished from it as soon as he had sinned. And when the ruler came to Christ, saying, *Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* Our Lord knowing him to be a pharisee, bids him keep the law; he readily replies, all these have I observed from my youth up; our Lord then tells him, there was one thing lacking: *go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me,* Mark x. 17.—21. Which plainly implies, that though he had kept the law, as he thought, yet this could not give him a title to eternal life; but our Lord bids him part with all, and give to the poor, and take up his cross, and follow him. This would have proved him to be a changed man, one that was willing to part with all for Christ, and the gospel; and so a genuine disciple: and therefore it follows, that had he given this evidence of his being a real believer, he would certainly have inherited eternal life. Upon the whole, it is abundantly evident, that it is Christ's works alone, in his life and death, that are the meritorious cause of eternal life; and faith in his merits and righteousness alone, that brings us to the enjoyment thereof. Therefore, this divine mercy flows purely from divine sovereignty, everlasting love, and infinite goodness; and principally appears in the covenant of grace, redemption through his blood, pardon of sin and justification by his righteousness, sanctification by his Spirit, in regenerating grace, and compleat salvation.—The excellency of this divine mercy, is, that it is infinite, eternal, and super-abounding; for where sin did abound, the grace and mercy of Christ doth much more abound. This mercy is rich, amazingly free, distinguishing, immutable and everlasting.

Reflection. Let God's dear children ever remember and consider the glorious fountain of this rich grace, and earnestly pray that it may be a means of mortifying their self-righteous pride.

pride, and teaching them to ascribe the whole glory of salvation to free grace alone.

We now come to the next letter, N ; and here we shall consider Christ, as a *Notable Friend*. This will conspicuously appear, if we consider with what readines, chearfulness and diligence, he executed every part of his Father's work, which consisted in doing good to the bodies and souls of men ; as he himself tells us, saying, *I must work the work of him that sent me, while it is day : the night cometh, when no man can work*, John ix. 4. View him in all the scenes of his life, and you will see how active he was in every part of his work. See him working miracles, healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, casting out devils, cleansing of lepers, feeding the multitude, and raising the dead. Consider also, how much time he spent in prayer; sometimes teaching his disciples to pray ; at other times praying for them ; praying for the increase of his kingdom, and success of the gospel : thus he often spent whole nights in prayer. At other times he was preaching the word : see the excellent sermon he preached upon the mount : how were his discourses calculated both for conviction and comfort ! His sermons were remarkably plain, faithful, affectionate, sound, experimental and practical. After all, see him giving himself up freely into the hands of divine justice, in order to *make his soul an offering for sin*. View him at the passover, and instituting the Lord's supper. Follow him to the garden ; there see his agony and bloody sweat ! see him betrayed into the hands of sinners, brought before the high priest, spit upon, buffeted, smitten, and scourged ; brought to Pilate's bar, stripped, the scarlet robe, (or old cloak) put upon him, and crowned with thorns by the Roman soldiers ; then led to Calvary, nailed to the cross, gall and vinegar given him to drink, and his side pierced with a bloody spear ! With what chearfulness and alacrity did he pass through every scene of action ! thus he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth ; but freely laid down his life for the sheep. He is likewise as industrious now he is in heaven, for he ever liveth to make intercession for all the chosen race, and continues to send the holy Spirit, agreeable to the gracious promise he made his disciples when he was about to depart, that when he went away he would send the Comforter, even the Spirit of truth. And thus he will continue to execute all his gracious designs, till the last stone shall be brought forth with shoutings,

shoutings, crying, grace, grace unto it. Then shall he give up his mediatorial kingdom, that God may be all in all.

Reflection. May the consideration of Christ as a notable Friend, stir up all the people of God to a greater activity and zeal in his work and service, and teach them day by day to give up themselves, body and soul, as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable in his sight.

The next letter is O; and here we shall treat of Christ, as the sinner's *Only Friend*. It is true, that God the divine Father, and the Holy Spirit, are equally friends to sinners with the Lord Jesus Christ; so that when we speak of Christ, as the sinners only friend, we do not mean to exclude either the Father, or divine Spirit, because they were equally concerned in their distinct offices and engagements, in order to bring about the glorious and compleat salvation of miserable sinners. Therefore, in considering Christ as our only friend, I shall consider him in his mediatorial office, and as the one and only mediator, agreeable to what the apostle declares, that *there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. If we consider what we are by nature and practice, and what sin has done to us; how it has separated and broke the original bond of friendship, that subsisted between God and his creature man, by alienating the mind and affections of man from God, and incurring the wrath and vengeance of God against man: Upon these principles it is evident, that there can be no communion or correspondence between the offended God, and offending man, without a reconciliation; neither can that be brought about, without a mediator: and herein the friendship of the Lord Jesus Christ appears, as the sinner's only friend, being every way qualified for so great and important a work and office, as a mediator between God and man, and being ready and willing to execute this office in behalf of miserable guilty sinners; and which he has done, and also had a right to do, he being the chosen of God his divine Father, and receiving a commission for the execution of this important office; as well as being qualified for it. He was God and man in one glorious person, as he took upon him our nature, which gave him the right to redemption; and in this view he could satisfy for sin, in the same nature that sinned, which was necessary to be done; and by this means the law of God was magnified, and made honorable; and hereby he was capable of suffering death also, which was the penalty of the law, that he might be merciful as well as faithful, and so have a fellow-feeling with

with his dear children in all their afflictions and temptations ; and also, that he might be pure and holy, so as to offer himself up without spot to God. It was likewise necessary he should be God as well as man, that he might be able to draw nigh to God, and propose terms and conditions of peace. This union of the human and divine nature in the glorious person of the Redeemer, likewise gives virtue to his obedience and sufferings, so as to make them of a satisfactory nature ; and that poor sinners might have a sure basis and foundation to trust upon for pardon and salvation, and be thereby induced to ascribe that honour which is due to his great and blessed name.

Reflection. How ought the people of God, to bless God the eternal Father, who gave this mediator ; and love the blessed Jesus, who so readily and willingly executed that very important office ; and adore the holy Spirit, who applies all those glorious blessings that are consequent thereupon.

We now enter upon the next letter, which is P ; and here we shall consider Christ, as a *Prudent Friend*. Thus he speaks of himself, by the name of Wisdom, saying, *I Wisdom dwell with prudence*, Prov. viii. 12. And God, his divine Father speaks of him likewise, saying, *My servant shall deal prudently*, Isa. lxi. 13. And the prudence of Christ, as the sinner's friend, will appear in the whole of his conduct. When his enemies endeavoured to entangle him by their questions, what wise and prudent answers did he give them, so as to confute them to their faces ! When they asked him, whether it was lawful to give tribute unto *Cæsar*, or not, what a prudent answer did he make, so as to silence their cavils, by saying, *Show me the tribute money* ; and then enquires, *Whose is this image and superscription ?* they said unto him, *Cæsar's*. Then said he unto them, *render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's*, Mark xii. 16, 17. So likewise, when he taught the people in the temple, and preached the gospel to them ; the chief priests and scribes came to him, and asked by what authority he did those things ; how wise and discreet he answered them, by proposing such a question to them, as they were not willing to answer, respecting the baptism of John, whether it was from heaven, or of men ? *They reasoned with themselves*, saying, *if we shall say, from heaven, he will say, why then believed ye him not : But if we say of men, all the people will stone us, for they be persuaded that John was a prophet*. Therefore they answered that they could not tell whence it was. And Jesus said unto them, *Neither tell I you, by what authority*

authority I do these things. But the great wisdom and prudence of Christ, as the sinners friend, most gloriously appears in all that he has done for them, in all his works in them, and in all he intends for them; as well as in the dispensations of his providence respecting them: when they need comfort and support, how suitably and sufficiently doth he give it, in great wisdom and prudence: when they need chastisement and correction, for their sins and transgressions against him, how prudently doth he lay it on them, so as to answer the end and purpose he intends and designs thereby. And how prudently has he appointed the exact time, as well as proper means, for the accomplishment of his gracious purposes; as in the case of Moses's preservation, that Pharaoh's daughter should be the instrument: here was great prudence, she being the most proper person, being the king's daughter. So likewise, the exact time she should come that way: had she come sooner the child might have been a sleep, and so not have been noticed by her: or had she been longer, his little heart might have burst with grief, or he might have died for want of care. The prudence of this blessed Friend of sinners, is also discovered in all he intends for them; especially that glory and happiness he has reserved for them in the kingdom of heaven. *For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive,* what great things the Lord hath laid up in heaven, for all those that love and serve him. How prudent has Christ ordered all, that the bitter shall come before the sweet, sorrow before joy, the cross before the crown; and that by this means they should be the more fitted for heaven, in order that the glory thereof may be the sweeter to them. And how will it heighten their joy in heaven, to reflect on what they once were, and what they now are! what they deserved as sinners, and what they enjoy as saints! what they had been by nature, and what they are made by grace! what comfort they enjoyed amongst God's people, and what sweet communion they had with God on earth; and what divine raptures they are now in the possession of, with the church triumphant above; and what divine joy, as well as glory, they are made partakers of, in beholding the glories, and singing the praises of Jesus, their blessed friend, for ever and ever.

Reflection. May these sacred truths teach all the dear people of God this prudent lesson, to be humble and submissive under every dispensation of providence, so resolving it all in this point, that the Lord Jesus Christ, who is a prudent friend,

friend, does all things right and well, and knows infinitely better than all his creatures, what is for the best.

The next letter is Q; and here we shall consider Christ, as a *Quicken*ing Friend. Christ is the believer's life, as the apostle says, *When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.** He is the fountain of life, being the believer's head: *And our life is hid with Christ in God.* He is the bread of life, that came down from heaven, of which if a man eat he shall live for ever. It is he that gives natural, spiritual, and eternal life; he breathed into man the breath of life, and he became a living soul. It is he, by his holy Spirit, and heavenly grace, that quickens his children when dead in trespasses and sins; and he not only makes them alive at first, but makes them lively in the acts and exercises of faith, love, and every grace. That the children of God, as well as others in a state of nature, are dead in trespasses and sins, is clear and plain both from scripture and experience. First, they are dead in sin, not having by nature the least power or ability to perform any spiritual act, as the understanding is full of darkness, the will full of disobedience, and the affections are alienated from God. Man is also dead with respect to his taste, hearing, conversation and breath. The dead sinner is entirely destitute of spiritual breath, being an entire stranger to a spirit of prayer and supplication.—It is said of Saul, after his conversion, *Behold, he prayeth*; which evidently proves, that although he was a Pharisee, and had great zeal and much sincerity, yet till that time was a stranger to real prayer. The sinner is, indeed, alive and active respecting the things of time and sense: for instance; how active is the pleasure-taker, in the pursuit of pleasure; and the man of honor, to attain his purpose; and the covetous wretch, to add to his beloved heap; but with respect to spiritual things, it may be said of them; as it is of idols, *They have eyes, but they see not; ears, but they hear not; tongues, but they speak not; hands, but they handle not; feet, but they walk not; neither is there any breath in their nostrils.*† So likewise they may be said to be dead, as they are guilty in the sight of God, and under sentence of death; for *he that believeth not, is condemned already.*‡ Nothing short of the almighty power of this quickening Friend, can quicken a dead sinner.—This divine and spiritual life, is a new creation: and who created man at first? it was God. And can it be rational to suppose, that a less power is required to quicken, or new create, a dead sinner, than to give him an existence? But the

the friendship of Christ, as a quickening friend, will further appear, if we consider what this divine and spiritual life consists in: it consists in a life of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; a life of communion with God; a life of comfort and consolation in the promises of the gospel; a life of justification, sanctification, and in God's time, it will terminate in a life of glorification, with the Lord Jesus Christ, for ever and ever.

Reflection. If we are so happy as to have a good hope through grace that this blessed Jesus is our quickening Friend, let us ever remember what obligations of love and gratitude we are under for so precious and important a blessing.

This brings us to the next letter, which is R; and here we shall consider Christ as a *Resolute Friend*. The appellations given him, and characters he bears in scripture, prove the resolution of his mind: he is called, *The Captain of the Lord's host*;* and, *The Lion of the tribe of Judah.*† The wonderful actions also, which he has performed, shew him to have great courage and resolution. He was determined from eternity, to be the sinner's Friend. He well knew what difficulties lay in the way; what opposition he should meet with, and what dangers he would have to encounter, arising from the state and condition poor sinners were in. He well knew injured justice would not spare him one moment, nor abate him one farthing; and that God's holy law would pour forth all its dreadful curses on his guiltless soul; that legions of devils would fall upon him with dreadful roar, and endeavour to devour him, if possible; that wicked men would hunt after his life to take it away; that sorrow and distress should follow him, from the cradle to the cross; that the birds of the air should have nests, and the foxes should have holes, but the Son of Man not know where to lay his head: that God his divine Father would forsake him, and the agonies of death, and pains of hell, take hold upon him: that he should sweat great drops of blood in the garden, and his soul be exceeding sorrowful within him.—A view of these things did not discourage him in the least; but, for the joy set before him, he endured the cross, and despised the shame;‡ overcame every enemy, surmounted every difficulty, came off a mighty conqueror, compleated a glorious salvation, secured everlasting glory and honor to himself, opened the grand store-house of grace and mercy for guilty sinners, and proved himself to be, in the presence of men, angels and devils, a resolute Friend, in behalf of all true believers, for ever and ever.

Reflection.

* Josh. v. 14.

† Rev. v. 5.

‡ Heb. xii. 3.

Reflection. May the consideration of Christ, as a resolute Friend, inspire the people of God with a holy resolution, and christian courage, in opposing all the temptations of sin and satan ; and make them faithful unto death, that they may receive a crown of everlasting life.

The next letter is S ; and here we shall consider Christ, as a *Sufficient Friend*. When Jacob heard that Joseph was alive, the good old patriarch said, *It is enough*. And when a poor distressed sinner is told by the blessed Spirit of God that the Lord Jesus Christ is his friend, he says, *It is sufficient, I want no more ; My beloved is mine, and I am his*. And although my sins are as black as hell, and I a guilty rebel, the blood of my blessed Friend is sufficient to cleanse me, and make me as white as snow ; and his precious merits are sufficient to procure a compleat and glorious pardon for all my aggravated guilt. There is also a sufficiency in his divine righteousness, to justify my poor soul before a heart-searching and re-intrying God ; and a sufficiency of grace in his Spirit, to sanctify me throughout, and make me meet and fit for glory. There is a sufficiency of power in his arm, to keep me through faith unto salvation. There is also a sufficiency of wisdom in Christ, to direct me aright through this waste howling wilderness ; as well as a sufficiency of goodness in Christ, to supply all my needs, as David says, *The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.** In my Father's house, there is bread enough and to spare. He has balsams to heal my wounds, wine to cheer my heart, oil of joy to make glad my countenance, the grace of faith to make me rich, the best robe to put upon me, shoes for my feet, a ring for my finger, a mansion-house for me to dwell in for ever, a crown of glory in view, a throne and paradise above, with the glorious state-chariot, paved with love, and troops of the life-guards of heaven to attend me, with a large sufficiency of love in his heart to heal all my backslidings, and exceeding great and precious promises to support me under the greatest distresses, as, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee :† and, I will put my fear in thy heart, that thou shalt not depart from me :† with every thing suited to the taste, beautiful to the sight, charming to the ear, ravishing to the heart, striking to the passions, and satisfying to the soul of a believing sinner*. And I have a commission to tell every inquiring sinner, that there is yet room.

• Wealth and honour I disdain ;
 Earthly comforts all are vain :
 These can never satisfy—
 Give me Christ, or else I die.
 Nothing else do I require ;
 Only Jesus I desire.
 Hear my never ceasing cry,—
 Give me Christ, or else I die.

Reflection. May the view of Christ as a sufficient Friend, encourage every poor indigent sinner to come to this glorious store-house of gospel blessings, for every suitable supply they need, for body or soul, life or death, time or eternity.

We now come to the next letter, T ; and here we shall shew, that Christ is a *Tried Friend* ; as the prophet declares, *Therefore, thus saith the Lord God, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth, shall not make haste.** God his divine Father has tried him ; he poured forth the vials of wrath upon him, all which he bore with great firmness and courage. The law of God has tried him, and poured forth all its dreadful curses upon him ; these he also sustained with great fortitude. Divine Justice tried him, pursuing him with flaming vengeance, till all its demands were exacted ; and he still continued sufficient for the work. The devil tried him forty days, tempting him in the wilderness, but could gain no advantage against him. The lawyers and rulers amongst the Jews tried him, but he baffled all their designs. Herod and Pontius Pilate tried him, but all in vain. At last, death and the grave tried him, but he surmounted and over came all, and arose a mighty conqueror. He has likewise been tried by good men in all ages, who have ever found him to be a true friend. The patriarchs all tried him, and found him to be a most excellent friend. The holy prophets, and ancient seers, tried him, and oftentimes proved his sweet friendship ; it was this that made David say, *O God, thou art my God, early will I seek thee; my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.*† It was this made him say, *I was glad when they said unto me, let us go up to the house of the Lord.*‡ The three children in the fiery furnace found Christ to be a blessed friend ; and Daniel in the lion's den, tried him, and found

found him to be the same. The blessed apostles, and glorious company of martyrs, will appear as witnesses, that Christ is truly his people's friend. The church militant, and the church triumphant above, will all give in their testimony to this glorious truth, that the Lord Jesus Christ is a friend in need, a friend indeed, and a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. *The government is upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of peace.** Thus he has been the tried Friend of his people in all ages.

Reflection. As the Lord Jesus Christ has ever been proved by his people, to be a tried friend, may this be a means of confirming their faith in him, and actuating their love more effectually to him.

The next letter is U; and here we shall consider Christ, as a *Useful Friend*. The use and excellency of Christ, as a friend, can only be known by those who are sensible of their need of him, and have experienced the favour of his good ointments; felt the power of his grace, and known the value of his righteousness. And the usefulness of Christ, as a friend, appears in all that he is to his people, and in all he bestows upon them, as all his dealings with them are in mercy, and useful to them. What infinite use and comfort do they enjoy by virtue of relation to him, and union with him! the beauty of his person is useful, to strike all the passions of the mind, and draw all the affections to love Christ. How useful are his perfections to encourage our souls to fly to him as an able Saviour. How useful is that divine knowledge he gives, to make a sinner wise, so as to chuse that better part which cannot be taken away. The use and excellency of his precious blood has been experienced by thousands and millions of filthy and guilty sinners, as it has divine efficacy both to cleanse and pardon; nay, even to raise the dead; and so may truly and properly be called, the real balsam of life. How useful is his righteousness to justify, and his holy Spirit, and heavenly grace, to sanctify. How useful the staff of promise, to comfort and support under trials and distresses, and defend a man against an enemy or beast of prey: and the rod of correction is necessary and useful, when the sheep stray: well therefore, might David say, *thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*† How useful is every affliction, temptation and distress, because they shall all work together for good; as David says, *it was good for me that I was afflicted.*‡ And how useful every doctrine of God's

* Isa. ix. 6. † Psa. xxiii. 4. ‡ Psa. cxix. 71.

God's word, and every ordinance of his house ; yea, they are all sweet and profitable to the dear children of God.

Reflection. As Christ is so useful in every respect and consideration, may every true believer be enabled to make a proper use of his person, love and grace, and every precious blessing they receive from so useful a friend.

We now come to the next letter, which is V ; and here we shall consider Christ, as a *Virtuous Friend*. How many are boasting of the virtues of human reason ; but if you want to see true virtue, you must come to the Lord Jesus Christ ; for all real virtue is originally in him, and flows from him, to all the dear objects of his love : as in the instance of the poor woman, when she said, if she could but touch the hem of his garment, she should be made whole : accordingly, having made her way through the crowd, she quickly found all her wishes accomplished. And when Jesus enquired who touched him, and the disciples replied, the multitude throng thee ; nay but, says Jesus, there is virtue gone out of me. (See Mark v.) There is a real virtue in the person of Christ, both as God and man, in all his divine perfections, glorious offices, and sweet relations. What a healing, as well as purifying virtue, is there in his precious blood ; what a justifying virtue, in his compleat and perfect righteousness : and what a sanctifying virtue, in the precious influences and powerful operations of saving grace upon the heart. What a divine virtue is there also, in every blessing he gives :—saving convictions have such a virtue in them, as to work a thorough reformation : true and saving faith hath such a blessed virtue in it, as vitally to lead the soul to Christ. True love to God discovers its virtue, by drawing the affections from this wicked world, and fixing them in a superlative way upon the Lord Jesus Christ. So likewise, there is a glorious virtue in the blessed word and gospel of Christ, in the hand of the Divine Spirit ; it is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, to salvation, to all that believe. My words are spirit and life, says the blessed Jesus. The word of God has the virtue of fire, to melt the hard heart of a sinner. Thus he speaks by the mouth of the prophet, saying, *Is not my word like as a fire, and as a hammer, that breaketh the rock in pieces.** And what divine power and virtue has attended the word of the Lord in numberless instances. Three thousand felt the virtue of it at one time, who being pierced to the heart, cried out, *Men and brethren, what shall we do ?*† Its virtue, is enlightening, warming, penetrating, purifying, quickening, powerful

* Jer. xxiii. 29. † Acts ii. 37.

powerful and assimulating. *The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandments of the Lord are pure, enlightening the eyes.**

Reflection. May every convinced sinner, from a sense of his misery, and sight of this blessed Saviour, and a credit of the glorious promise, be encouraged to come to this amiable Jesus, that he may experience all that divine virtue that flows from his sacred person, love and grace.

The next letter is W; and here we shall shew, that Christ is a *Wonderful Friend*. This will wonderfully appear, if we consider the two natures in Christ, being God and man in one glorious person. Well might the apostle say, *Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh.*† This is so wonderful to many, that because they cannot comprehend the mystery, they wickedly deny it. The incarnation of Christ is also very wonderful, he being born of a virgin, *Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted, is, God with us.*‡ Further, all the words Christ has spoken are wonderful words. What wonderful words did he speak, when he made the worlds? *He commanded, and it stood fast:*§ *he said, Let there be light, and there was light.*|| What wonderful words did he speak in doctrine, so that when the officers were sent to take him, they returned to the rulers, and said, *Never man spake like this man?*¶ What wonderful words did he also speak at the grave of Lazarus, when he only said, *Lazarus, come forth*, and he arose? What wonderful words did he speak on the boisterous ocean, *Peace, be still*, and the sea was calm? What wonderful words did he speak upon the cross, respecting his murderers, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?* What wonderful words did he speak to the dying thief, when he said, *To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise?* What wonderful words did he speak to Peter, Thomas, and all his disciples, after his resurrection? What wonderful words of comfort and consolation has he spoken in the promises, to all his dear children? And what wonderful words of wrath and vengeance has he spoken, in all his awful threatenings, against the wicked and ungodly? Also, the works of Christ, are wonderful works. View the works of creation, in the natural, rational, animal, and vegetable worlds. View the wonderful works of providence and grace. See the wonders of Christ in the methods of grace. How wonderful, that he

should

* Psal. xix. 7, 8. † 1 Tim. iii. 16. ‡ Matt. i. 23. § Psa. xxxiii. 9.
|| Gen. i. 3. ¶ John vii. 46.

Should give any grace; much more so, that he should give plenteous grace, and glory in the end! How wonderful, that he should pass by the fallen race of angels, and only give grace to sinful men; and only to some among these! for *all men have not faith*, says the apostle. Indeed, he was under no obligation to give grace to any, but might justly have condemned the whole world for sin; but he is pleased to give grace to his people; for he hath loved them with an everlasting love, therefore with loving kindness doth he draw them. And what reason can be assigned for it? I answer, his divine sovereignty. Why did his gracious Majesty King George II. pardon nineteen rebels, and hang the twentieth, in the year 1746? Perhaps you will say, because he was a merciful man. True, but was not his mercy an act of sovereignty?—So is the mercy of Christ to his people: but all those who are determined to oppose and cavil with this doctrine, would improve their time much better, in praying to the Lord Jesus Christ, to give them clearer views of the sacred scriptures, and a hearty approbation of the will and works of God, upon this principle, that the Judge of the whole earth will do all things right, and is no ways accountable to his creatures for any part of his conduct. View grace in every respect, and you will find it free respecting its motives, sovereign with respect to its objects, and eternal in its duration. Also, the means by which grace is received, are wonderful. The general means is a preached gospel, by men of like passions with ourselves. The great God might have sent angels on this important errand, had it been his pleasure, as he did at the birth of the Friend of sinners; but he has been pleased to commission and employ in this glorious work, men; and not only worthy, pious, learned men, but sometimes plain, pious, illiterate men, whom he hath instructed into the truth, by his blessed Spirit. He took David from the sheepfold, Amos from the herd, Peter from his nets, and that able divine, John Bunyan, from his kettles. Herein his sovereignty is wonderfully displayed! and however contemptible these may seem in the eyes of a carnal world, yet it is the wisdom of God, and the power of God for salvation, to all that believe. So likewise, Christ appears as a wonderful friend, in the effects of his grace. God's children, are men wondered at. Their experience is very wonderful to a carnal world. The doctrines they believe are also very wonderful to others, as that salvation is without works, though not faith without works: this seems very strange to them; the reason is, because they have not tasted

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the joys of salvation, neither are they acquainted with the true way of life. The conduct and behaviour of these people is also wonderful to others; they think them over precise, and that there need not be such an over to do; they see no necessity for so much prayer, and so many sermons: they think they need not be so very reserved, and a poring so often in the Bible. They think they might be a little more brisk and merry, come and visit their neighbours, and have a little innocent diversion with them.—Consider, my friends, what Christ has done for his people, what obligations they are under to him, and how precious time is; therefore, they have none to spare, but are hastening home to their Father's house; and whenever they can spare a few minutes from the necessary affairs of life, they are glad to improve them for Christ; therefore they have no idle time to spend in trifling things: their souls are of great value, and must not be trifled with. Their highest pleasure, is in the sweet enjoyment of Christ, and they desire to be found in their duty, since wisdoms *ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 17. But perhaps some may say, we do not see this strictness among many professors of religion now a-days, for even many live as the world lives, and do as the world does. The more is the pity; but be careful that you do not cast away religion upon this account, and from hence conclude, that there is no true godliness to be found: for the tares grow amongst the wheat. All who make a profession, have not the real possession of grace in the heart. Many people make two mistakes here; when a professor gets drunk, or commits some scandalous sin, they cry out, ha! this is their religion! which is a gross mistake, because this practice discovers the *want* of religion. The next thing that comes in course, is, they are all alike. This, also, is as great a mistake as the other; for, blessed be God, they are not all alike. There ever was, and ever will be, an essential difference between a real christian and a meer formalist. A good man may fall into sin, but is glad to get out again, and is truly humbled for it; whereas a wicked man delights in it, and only trembles, when he reflects on the punishment connected with it. Will any wise man ever condemn a whole body of people for the bad conduct of some? certainly he will not.—We may further observe, that Christ will appear to be a wonderful friend in his ultimate ends and designs of grace, as it is given to his people, in order to fit them for glory hereafter. And thus the happy subjects of grace, being a wonder to themselves, will cast down their crowns at

the feet of this wonderful Friend, and ascribe all honor and glory, thanksgivings and praises, to God and the Lamb, for ever and ever.

Reflection. Why was I made to hear thy voice,
And enter while there's room,
When thousands make a wretched choice,
And rather starve than come?
'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forc'd us in;
Else we had still refus'd to taste,
And perish'd in our sin.

WATTS.

The next letter which calls for our attention, is X ; and as I could find no proper word beginning with this letter, suitable to my purpose, I thought how fond the Roman Catholics are of a cross, to put them in mind of the dying love of Christ, as they say. Now, though I by no means approve of any superstitious rite or ceremony, yet see no crime as the letter X is a cross, in considering here the dying love of Christ upon the cross: and therefore from this letter, shall consider Christ as a *Dying Friend*. And, indeed, what friendship can be compared to this. If a person of great honor and riches, was to divest himself of all he enjoyed, in order to give to a poor distressed object, as a pledge of friendship, it would be a great favour, and a kind condescension indeed! But what is all this, when compared with the dying love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who not only, *though he was rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich*; but also, he died, *the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God*? And therefore, the apostle, speaking of the great love of Christ, takes notice of the state and condition we were in when he died for us, as *being without strength, and ungodly*: he then observes, *For scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die*; but herein is the great love of Christ displayed, *in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*. And if we consider all the circumstances attending his death, and who they were he died for, with the glorious end and design thereof, it will discover wonderous love indeed! It was not merely dying, as a separation of soul and body, which one might do for some innocent good man, as such a separation might be attended with very little pain; but the death of this Friend of sinners, was attended with the most dolorous sufferings, distresses and afflictions, and the dreadful

wrath

wrath and vengeance of an angry God, for *he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with griefs*, being a mourner all his days; *he was wounded for our transgressions*;—*the chastisement of our peace was upon him*. *It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and make his soul an offering for sin*. And who was all this for? it was for sinners, yea, the vilest of sinners, even sinners as black as hell! *It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief*. The grand end and design to be answered by the death of Christ, is, the everlasting salvation of sinners, and the eternal glory of God's grace.

Reflection. As the Lord Jesus Christ has given such a wonderful display of love, as to die for sinners, may all believers earnestly desire to express their love to Christ, by dying daily to sin, and living to holiness.

We now come to the letter Y; and here we shall shew that Christ is a *Yielding Friend*. This blessed character of Christ will gloriously appear, if we consider the numberless instances wherein applications have been made, and requests granted, by this yielding Friend. The first instance I would mention, is that of Moses, who after enjoying many peculiar favours, humbly requested to see the glory of Christ. The answer he received, was, *I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee*. And he said, *Thou canst not see my face; but, behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock*. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that *I will put thee in a cleft of the rock; and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by*. And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen, Exod. xxxiii. 19,—23. Solomon is a glorious type of Christ, and the queen of Sheba, of a believing sinner: all her requests king Solomon complied with; he answered all her hard questions, granted all her desires, and indulged her curiosity. And how indulgent is the Lord Jesus Christ, in granting all the requests of his people, so far as it is for their good, and his own glory!

Reflection. As the Lord Jesus Christ is so kind as to comply with every reasonable request his children make by prayer and supplication, let us learn to be careful, by way of gratitude, to yield a cheerful obedience to all his gracious commands.

We now come to the last letter, which is Z; and here we shall consider Christ, as a *Zealous Friend*, or *Zion's Friend*. The zeal of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the sinner's friend, appears

from first to last. He was very zealous when the covenant of grace was first proposed:—he was very zealous in performing all the conditions, and in bestowing all the blessings of that covenant: he is very zealous in destroying all our enemies, and subduing all our sins; having told us by his apostle, that *sin shall not have dominion over us, for we are not under the law, but under grace.* He is zealous to bring all his dear children safe to glory, for *he ever liveth to make intercession for them.* Thus he pleads upon the footing of strict justice; *Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory,* John xvii. 24. And let it be observed, that all this precious friendship, and these glorious blessings, are only enjoyed by zion's children; because they and they only, are interested in this special love, washed in this precious blood, cloathed with this glorious righteousness, and sanctified by the blessed Spirit, and so made meet and fit for the enjoyment of this promised glory. Therefore it becomes us strictly to enquire, what ground we have to hope that we belong to this family, and are zion's genuine children, and this we shall do, after making a reflection, by considering the last head.

Reflection. Let the dear people of God ever be zealous for the honor and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, who ever was, and ever will be, a zealous friend to them.

III. We now come to the third thing proposed, which was to describe the characters of those who may and have a right to speak the language of the text, and say, *This is my Friend.*

The first characteristic I shall mention, respecting those who have a right to say Christ is their friend, is, that the Lord Jesus Christ is exceeding precious to them, so that they esteem and prize him far beyond every other object; *unto you, therefore, which believe, he is precious.*—Another evidence to prove our right, is relying upon him alone, as the glorious object of faith, having all our trust and dependance, for life and salvation, upon the merits and righteousness of the friend of sinners alone. *He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be damned.*—The next evidence, is, that if Christ is our friend, we shall be often thinking of him. Can a person have a friend he dearly loves, and not think of him? Impossible. The fond mother, often thinks of her tender infant; the indulgent husband, will often remember his loving bride; and a true believer cannot help exercising his thoughts, respecting this kind and affectionate Friend.—Another token, is, that we shall be often sending to him, and shall think

think how long it is since we heard from him. Nothing more common than for friends to enquire after each other's welfare.—A further evidence will be, by visiting our friend. When shyness between friends begins to take place, and visiting begins to cease, it betokens that something is the matter; for *How can two walk together, except they be agreed*; but where the bond of friendship is firm, there will be frequent visits kept up, and a harmony between the parties. Many sweet visits do the dear people of God pay to Jesus their best friend: his company is very profitable, and much to be desired, and they who have once enjoyed it, long for another visit. And these visits are always returned; for if Christ be your friend, he will likewise come to see you. *If any man love me, says Christ, he shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. And my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.*—A further evidence of Christ being your friend, will be known, by your using your utmost endeavour to promote his cause and interest in the world: your daily prayer will be, *Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done.* You will speak a word for him, as often as you may have opportunity, and recommend him as a most precious and important Friend. You will speak highly of his atonement and righteousness, and earnestly recommend all the precious blessings of his grace, and the great necessity of experiencing the power of them upon the heart.—A further token denoting Christ to be your friend, will be evidenced by a serious, diligent, and persevering self-examination, whether you are a genuine disciple of Christ, and love him with a superlative love. You may often be suspicious lest your heart should deceive you, but the very thought of your being deceived, will make you tremble; and the languish of your heart will be, Lord, I would not be mistaken in this point for ten thousand worlds. As a sight and sense of sin increases in your mind, under the enlightening influences of God's Spirit upon your heart, you will earnestly desire a Saviour: and as you are led to see the suitableness and preciousness of his merits and righteousness, and the rich blessings he has to bestow, to do your soul good, you will above all things desire to partake of these: and being led by the divine Spirit, to trust alone in the Lord Jesus Christ, for life and salvation, and having tasted the sweetness of gospel grace in your heart, it will greatly endear Christ to you, and make you love him for what he has done for you, and cause you to cry with the great apostle, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ,*

Christ, by whom I am crucified to the world, and the world to me. And as you continue to grow in the divine life, your understanding increasing, and your judgment being more penetrating, you will be led to love Christ more particularly for what he is, as a God of pure holiness, as well as rich mercy and free grace. So likewise, you will love all the people of God; and you will not love them for opinion's sake, or because they are of your party, but you will love them for Christ's sake, and because they are like him: and those of them of every denomination, who discover the most piety and real religion, and are most like Christ in heavenly-mindedness, will be had in the highest esteem and veneration by you.—A further evidence in your favor, will be, a conscientious regard to every private duty and public ordinance or institution, which God has commanded you to be found in the use of. And as the whole of God's mind and will, respecting both our faith and practice, is plainly revealed in the old and new testament, you will make that your daily study, and cheerfully express your love to Christ, by a ready and willing obedience to every command, thinking it your highest honor to be a despised disciple and follower of the Friend of sinners; acknowledging, that Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden light.

Again, if Christ be your friend, you will express a holy indignation against all sin and ungodliness; you will hate all the works of darkness, and you will be particularly jealous over heart-sins, and especially those sins which most easily beset you; and whenever you find yourself deceived and entangled with sin, you will confess it, and grieve much before God on the account of it; and never be happy 'till you have been enabled by grace to crucify it. You will hate sin as the worst of evils, and satan as the worst of enemies: and the more you are enabled to hate sin, the more you will prize and love the glorious gospel. You will admire the wisdom that shines in the gospel. How God is honored, and the salvation of sinners secured. You will also rejoice in the grace of the gospel, because you have tasted the sweetness of gospel grace, and will be amazed to think that you should be one of its happy subjects; and will be often praising God for the power of the gospel, because it was that which bowed your stubborn will, and broke your hard heart, and brought you to be willing to be saved in God's way: and as you are thus brought to love the glorious gospel, (being convinced of its intrinsic goodness, ravished with its beauty, subdued by its power, and transformed by its amazing influences) so you will

will also love the law, as it is holy, just and good ; for *the law is good, if a man use it lawfully*. Christ came not to destroy the law, but to obey and fulfil the law: and though God's people do not expect life and salvation by the law, yet they love it as a rule of action, and desire obedience to it, in order to shew their love to the Lord Jesus Christ.—But another proof of Christ being our friend, will appear not only in our delighting to see the image of Christ in others, but in longing to be more like Christ ourselves ; for the more we are like him, the more we shall enjoy of him, the more powerful and vital will our union be to him, and the more sweet and precious our communion with him. The higher our degree in vital holiness, the more perfect and compleat our joy and happiness. Why are the carnal world strangers to true happiness ?—because they are destitute of gospel holiness. Why is it that God's children, who are the subjects of saving grace, have so many complaints ?—because they have so many sins which continually distress them. Why is it that the saints in heaven are much more happy than the saints on earth ?—because they are delivered from sin, the cause of every evil. Take away the cause, and the effect will cease. Perfect holiness, will always constitute compleat and everlasting happiness. But what effect hath the power of these things upon the hearts of God's dear children ? surely, it makes them long more and more to be with the Lord Jesus Christ, their glorious and most blessed friend ; for what is more common, than for a person to long to be with his friend, a child with its parent, or a wife with her husband ? so likewise, the believer longs to be with Christ, as the apostle expresses it, *Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better*, Phil. i. 23.

Reflection. First, We may from hence learn the great importance of having Christ for our friend, inasmuch as no other person can save but Christ alone, he being the only way to the Father.

Secondly, It becomes each person to enquire what ground or reason they have to hope Christ is their friend. Have you felt the power of his grace upon your heart ? Have you passed under a divine change ? Do you know what it is to be born again ? *If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new*, 2 Cor. v. 17.

Thirdly, What a pitiable state and condition are all those in, who are careless and altogether unconcerned about the friendship of Christ ! who are determined to risk all for the sake

sake of sinful pleasures, and the vanities of a wicked world ! May these persons consider the prize of a soul, the certainty of death, and the horrors of eternal wrath and vengeance ; and what they would then give for a friend, could one be found.

Fourthly, How mistaken are all those who vainly suppose the friendship of Christ is to be merited by their good works ! whereas, the friendship of Christ is entirely free : it is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but of God's free love and grace alone.

Lastly, How humble and thankful ought all true believers to be, for such rich grace and glorious friendship they enjoy from the Lord Jesus Christ ! May they ever consider what obligations of love and gratitude they are under to this unspeakable Friend, who hath loved them with an everlasting love, saved them with an everlasting salvation, and who hath promised to glorify them for ever and ever. Now unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father, to him be glory and honor, thanksgivings and praises, for ever ascribed, by the church militant, and the church triumphant. Amen and amen.

—ashamed of Me—Mark viii. 38.

An HYMN, by the late Rev. Mr. GREIG, of St. Albans.

JESUS ! and shall it ever be ?
A mortal man ashamed of thee ?
Scorn'd be the thought by rich and
poor ;
O may I scorn it more and more !

Ashamed of Jesus ! sooner far
Let ev'ning blush to own a star,
Ashamed of Jesus ! just as soon
Let midnight be ashamed of noon.

'Tis ev'ning with my soul 'till he,
That morning star, bids darkness flee ;
He sheds the beam of noon divine
O'er all this midnight soul of mine.

Ashamed of Jesus ! shall yon field
Blush when it thinks who bids it yield ?

Yet blush I must while I adore,
I blush to think I yield no more.

Ashamed of Jesus ! that dear friend,
On whom my hopes for heaven depend !
No, when I blush—be this my shame,
That I no more revere his name.

Ashamed of Jesus ! yes, I may,
When I've no crimes to wash away ;
No tear to wipe, no joy to crave,
No fears to quell, no soul to save.

Till then (nor is the boasting vain)
Till then, I boast a Saviour slain.
And O may this my portion be,
That Christ is not ashamed of me !

T H E E N D.

